

Story 1057 (Transcribed from tape by Ahmet Ali Arslan; ATON does not have tape) Narrator: Asım Koçak
Location: Hamak village, Çıldır kaza, Kars Province

Date: August 1975

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Plucking Geese

There were many people in a certain village who talked often about a great man they had heard about. great man lived in a nearby city. They said to other many times, "There is a man living in that city who charges people thousands of liras just to talk to him. How can he manage to do that? Why is his conversation worth that much?"

Three of the villagers decided to test that great man. They wanted to hear what he said and then determine whether or not it was worth so much money. After saving up a considerable amount of money apiece, they went to the

and located the house of that great man. They sat down before his house and talked. The man understood why these villagers had come, though they did not open up a conversation with him for three days. During those three days each of the villagers was trying to persuade the other two to talk with the great man. But each of them refused to enter the house and talk with the great man

As they were sitting there, the great man came to the

Story 1057

door of his house and called a man who was passing by. He said to that person, "Friend, come over here." When passerby did so, the man reached down in his pocket took out some money. Then he said, "Take this money to the market and buy a soul. If you can't find a soul then buy a half-soul. If you can't find a half-soul, then buy some remedy." The villagers were listening very carefully to this conversation, and they were very curious about it

When the man who had gone to the market returned, the great man asked him, "Have you returned?"

"Yes, I have returned."

"What did you buy?"

"I couldn't buy a soul because I could not find one. I did find a half-soul, and I bought it at once. It is a good thing that I did, because there wasn't any remedy to be found there anywhere.

"Good," said the great man. "You did well

Then the great man started talking with his maid, and three villagers listened. She said to him, "Are you here or far away?"

"I am far away but I am coming closer.

"Are you two or three?" she asked.

Story 1057

"I have been two but now I am beginning to be three."

"How far are you from thirty-two?"

"Thirty have gone and only two remain."

"There are three geese here. Can you pluck a goose?"

"Yes. I am very good at that."

The three villagers were completely confused by what they heard. One of them said, "I think that he is as mad as I am!"

Another one of the villagers finally approached the great man and asked, "What is all this about? You gave money to a friend and told him to buy a soul. If he couldn't buy a soul, then he was supposed to buy a half-soul. But if he couldn't find a half-soul, then he was to buy a remedy. What is the meaning of all this? Can you explain it to us?"

The great man responded, "You already know that my comments on anything cost 1,000 liras. If you will pay me that amount, then I shall tell you the meanings of all things you have heard."

The three villagers put together enough money from their pockets to make 1,000 liras. They were very eager to learn the meanings of all of the confusing remarks that had been made.

The great man then began to explain their meanings.

Story

"What do you think a soul is? A soul is fresh meat-- something from a living creature. If you eat beef you are doing well. A half-soul is a fresh egg. A remedy is yoghurt.¹ You mix milk in the right way and make yoghurt from it. Then you eat the yoghurt. Your stomach talks, and then you feel better. Yoghurt is a remedy.

"To be far away means to be young and able to see at a great distance. To be coming closer means growing older and needing to get closer to anything in order to see it. To ask 'Are you two or three?' means 'Are you still walking on just your two legs, or do you need a cane also in order to walk?'

"I was asked, 'How far are you from thirty-two?' I answered, 'Thirty have gone, and only two remain.' This is a reference to teeth. We are all given thirty-two teeth, but we lose them after a while. I answered that I had only two of my thirty-two teeth left.

"She then said, "There are three geese here. Can you pluck a goose?' I answered, 'Yes. I am very good at that. You are the three geese, and I have just plucked 1,000 liras from you."

¹Yoghurt, a staple of Turkish diet, is often said to be a food that will settle the stomach after food poisoning or other digestive upset.